

Description

SEMI-FRAMELESS CABINET AND METHOD FOR MAKING THE SAME

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of United States Provisional Application Serial No. 60/452,894 filed March 7, 2003, the entire disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

[0002] The invention relates to a cabinet and a method for making a cabinet, and more specifically to a semi-frameless cabinet and method of making a semi-frameless cabinet.

[0003] In general, there are two styles of cabinets made throughout the world, framed cabinets and frameless cabinets. Framed cabinets have been the preferred style in North America, while the frameless style has been more predominant in Europe. The main difference between the two types of cabinets is the framed surface of the cabinets. In a framed-style cabinet, a framed surface surrounds the

cabinet doors. This frame overlaps with the entry space to the cabinet, thereby decreasing the access space to the cabinet. This can provide for reduced access to the cabinet for the end user and can be cumbersome to the manufacturer or installer when installing the cabinet hardware.

[0004] With the frameless design, there is no overlap with the cabinet interior opening, and thus access to the cabinet interior is unrestricted. In addition, since the cabinet doors are placed directly on the sides of the cabinet, as opposed to the frame or positioned behind the frame, shorter hinges and drawer guides, which are easier to install, can be used. One disadvantage of the frameless-style cabinets is the lack of acceptance by those who install the cabinets. This is mainly due to the fact that frameless cabinets do not have overhang and are fairly rigid in their construction, thereby providing the installer with very little scribe, or slack, wherein the cabinet can be manipulated to conform to the surface to which it is applied. In addition, due to the lack of a supportive frame structure, frameless cabinets must be built in a more sturdy configuration, thereby necessitating a heavier cabinet.

[0005] As such, it is desirable to provide a cabinet that encom-

passes all of the advantages of both types of cabinets. It is also desirable to produce such cabinets in an improved and efficient manner.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0006] A new and improved cabinet and style of making and installing a cabinet is provided that includes the advantages of both frameless and framed cabinets. In one embodiment, the cabinet includes a top panel, bottom panel, two side panels and a back panel. Each of the panels is connected together to form the structure of the cabinet. The face of each cabinet structure includes a front opening into the interior of the cabinet. Each of the front facing sides of the panels are provided with and include a groove, where an edging can be secured. The edging or edge material substantially surrounds the face or outer surface of the cabinet structure but does not extend into the front opening of the cabinet or into the interior of the cabinet structure.

[0007] Another aspect of the present cabinet is that the method for making the cabinet includes the advantages of both frameless and framed cabinets. In one embodiment of the method, cabinet panels are cut from a single piece of material. At least one side of each of the cabinet panels that

will have front exposure once the cabinet is assembled, or form the face of the cabinet structure, are then grooved and the edging is secured by conventional methods over the grooved side of each of the panels. The panels are then assembled to form a semi-frameless cabinet.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

[0008] The semi-frameless cabinet of the present invention may be more readily understood by reference to the following drawings. While certain embodiments are shown as illustrative examples of the semi-frameless cabinet, the scope of this application should not be construed as limited to these illustrative examples.

[0009] Figure 1 is a perspective view of the semi-frameless base cabinet of the present invention with an integrated toe kick in the side panels;

[0010] Figure 2 is an expanded view of the edging material that surrounds the face or outer surface of the cabinet structure;

[0011] Figure 3 is an exploded view of the cabinet shown in Figure 1;

[0012] Figure 4 is a view of the material components that make up a cabinet structure;

[0013] Figure 5 is a cross-sectional view of the cabinet in Figure

1; and

[0014] Figure 6 is another embodiment of the base cabinet of the present invention where the toe kick area is not integrated into the side panels of the cabinet.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0015] The present application provides an improved cabinet or cabinet system and method of making the same. The improved cabinet system encompasses the advantages of both framed and frameless cabinets. Such advantages include, but are not limited to, an overhang along the outer surface of the cabinet edge members, an edge that does not protrude into the cabinet opening, and a construction that allows the cabinet to have some scribe during installation. In addition, the improved cabinet system provides for an improved method of manufacture, which reduces the labor and required assembly space.

[0016] The improved cabinet system generally comprises one or more semi-frameless cabinets 10 made in accordance with the method described herein. The semi-frameless cabinet 10 generally includes a top panel 20, two side panels 22, a bottom panel 24, and a back panel 26. In addition, one or more middle shelves 28 may be included, thereby allowing for the construction of drawer space. Furthermore, one or

more of these panels can be excluded providing that it is not needed or desired in the overall end product. As best illustrated in Figure 4, each of these panels can be cut from a single piece of material by properly dimensioning the cut length. Figure 1 illustrates an assembled base cabinet 10. One or more cross-members (not shown) may be included to divide the cabinet into two sections, however it is preferable to simply dimension the cabinet smaller and attach multiple cabinets together. For example, it is preferred to dimension the cabinets either 24 inches or 12 inches in width. In general, 24 inch cabinets are used as base cabinets, while 12 inch cabinets are used as wall cabinets. If it is desirable to split the 24 inch cabinet, it is preferable to attach two 12 inch cabinets together.

[0017] An edge 40 creates the frame-like appearance around the face 41 of the cabinet 10. The edge 40 is attached to a side of each of front-accessible cabinet structural pieces, namely the top panel 20, two side panels 22, the bottom panel 24, and middle shelves 28. The top surface 20 may either be a complete piece covering the entire top of the cabinet 32, or, as shown in Figure 1, it may be less than the full dimension of the top of the cabinet. Preferably one

side of each of cabinet structural pieces has a groove 42 placed on the interior surface 44. The edge 40 is made with a corresponding groove 46 which is dimensioned such that the edge can be placed over the side of the cabinet structural piece that has groove 42. In one embodiment, the groove 42 is created in the center of the edge 40, thereby creating a U-shaped edge. However, one skilled in the art should appreciate that other configurations for the edge can be employed. When so applied, the edge 40 lies flush with the interior surface 44 of the cabinet structural piece and creates an overhang 50 similar to a framed cabinet. Preferably the overhang 50 is about 3/16 inch, however the overhang may be in the range of about 0.125 inch to about 0.5 inch.

[0018] Upon assembly of the cabinet structural pieces, the side pieces 22, typically, have grooves 52 along the interior surface 44, while the cross pieces, namely the top 20, the bottom 24 and middle shelves 28 include grooves 54 along the sides. The grooves 52, 54 can be a series of separated grooves that use biscuit (or Lamello) or rod joints 60 to attach two panels together, or can be continuous along the greater portion of the common length and attached using a spline (not shown). The back surface 26 is attached in a

similar fashion, wherein the grooves 52 and 54 are located along the back interior surface 44 and the side of the bottom surface 24. Other assembly techniques may be employed, such as, for example, screws or bolts.

[0019] Once the cabinets 10 are assembled, hardware can be added. Since the edge 40 is flush with the interior surfaces 44, hinges and drawer rollers can be mounted directly on the interior surface 44 of the side panels 22. As such, the hardware installed is easier to install and less cumbersome once installed. For example, drawer rollers used in framed cabinets typically need to run the entire length of the cabinet and then be secured by screws, or bolts, through the back panel 26 of the cabinet.

[0020] When constructing the cabinets 10, an improved method can be used wherein the cabinets can be made in a more efficient manner. In addition less floor space is required in the manufacturing facility to construct the present cabinet system. Instead of storing panels of various shapes and sizes required to manufacture framed cabinets, only three different pieces are required, as described below.

[0021] A single piece of material, such as, for example, wood, can be used to create each of the panel members. Preferably a 24 inch or 12 inch piece is processed and cut to

form a top panel 20, bottom panel 24, two side panels 22, a back panel 26 and one or more mid shelves 28. As shown in Figures 3 and 4, the side panels 22 can also be cut to create the recessed support, or toe kick, 80. In other embodiments, such as the one shown in Figure 6, the bottom panel 24 can meet squarely with the side panels 22 and the toe kick (not shown), if desired, can be added as a separate, stand-alone piece. In addition, multiple units can be cut simultaneously. For example, if 12 inch cabinet units are desired, each of the panels can be cut from a 24 inch board, then split down the middle. This will allow more units to be cut in a shorter amount of time. Each of the panels can then be aligned and run through a grooving machine to create a grooved side 42 for placement of edge 40. Optionally, panels that will be cut in half to make two panels can be grooved prior to cutting, thereby allowing the grooving on both sides of the uncut cabinet material. Edge 40, which may be stored with groove 46 precut, can then be applied over the grooved side 42 of each of the panels. The edge 40 may be held in place by glue, adhesive or some other conventional technique. Each of the panels are then drilled and prepared for assembly. The drilling step includes the cre-

ation of grooves 52, 54 wherein biscuit joints 60 will join the panels. Optionally, drill holes (not shown) can be created along the interior surface of the side panels 22 to allow for adjustable shelving to be placed at various heights. Hardware 70, such as handles, drawer guides, and hinges, for example, can be secured to the cabinet either before, or preferably, after assembly. The cabinet panels are brought into position of assembly and biscuit joints, dowel rods or a spline is placed in the corresponding grooves 52, 54 of two panels that are to be connected. The biscuit joints are secured by glue, adhesive, or some other conventional technique.

[0022] What has been described above includes several embodiments. It is, of course, not possible to describe every conceivable combination of components or methodologies for purposes of describing the systems and methods and so on employed in the manufacture of cabinets. One of ordinary skill in the art may recognize that further combinations and permutations are possible. This application is intended to embrace alterations, modifications, and variations that fall within the scope of the appended claims. Furthermore, the preceding description is not meant to limit the scope of the invention, and it is not limited to the

specific details, the representative apparatus, and illustrative examples shown and described. Accordingly, departures may be made from such details without departing from the spirit or scope of the applicant's general inventive concept. The scope of the invention is to be determined only by the appended claims and their equivalents.